

*The transmission schedule for MARLOWE: THE COMPLETE PLAYS is in two strands May/June and September:*

*Sunday, 30th May 1993:*

*DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE  
and THE MASSACRE AT PARIS  
(a double bill) directed by Alan Drury  
and Michael Earley*

*Sunday, 6th June 1993:*

*EDWARD II directed by Clive Brill*

*Sunday, 13th June 1993:*

*THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF  
DR JACQUES directed by Sue Wilson*

*Sunday, 26th September 1993:*

*THE JEW OF MALTA  
directed by Michael Fox*

*Sunday, 3rd October 1993:*

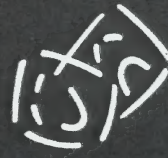
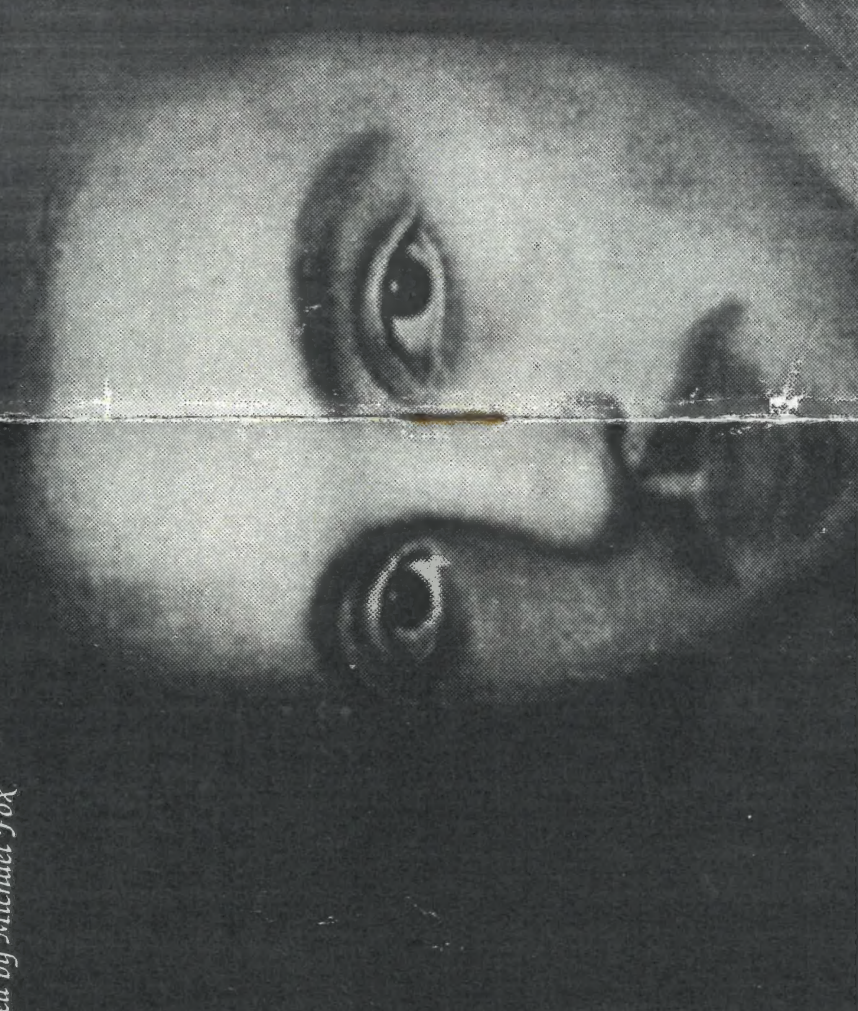
*TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT  
directed by Michael Fox*

*Dates are subject to confirmation.*

*Please check Radio Times for details.*

# Marlowe:

## The Complete Plays



RADIO · DRAMA  
BBC



## Introduction

### Marlowe - The Complete Plays

It is not often that one can produce the entire dramatic oeuvre of a famous playwright in celebration of a quatercentenary. Sadly, for posterity's sake, Christopher Marlowe left us with only six plays and all of these Radio 3 will be broadcasting during the course of this year.

Few playwrights have made such a revolutionary impact on audiences and the fellow dramatists of their period as did Christopher Marlowe, whose all-too-brief life ended in a grisly murder which seemed almost self-consciously purloined from one of his plots. Though credited with just a small body of plays (and a collection of exquisite poems), Marlowe helped in changing the very nature of English drama. In his innovative hands blank verse - the lively meter of Elizabethan poetic drama - came richly to life. In play after play - all written within a concentrated span of just five years - Marlowe's 'mighty line' forged some of the most colourful and outrageous heroes, heroines and anti-heroes of stage literature: Tamburlaine, Zenocrate, Faustus, Mephistophilis, Edward II, Gaveston, Young Mortimer, Barabas, the Guise, Dido and Aeneas. Most were rebels against convention and propriety; all offer challenging roles for actors.

Many years ago the critic Harry Levin wrote what is still one of the best all-round books about Marlowe called *The Overreacher*, which title is itself an apt description of Marlowe the man. At the outset Levin says that Marlowe's plays can probably be better realised on radio than on the stage. This is chiefly because radio gives the audience the chance to concentrate intently on Marlowe's powerful

words and imagery. Radio invites our imaginative minds to 'see' and realise the rich cosmos of his plays. Can any actress, however beautiful, truly live up to Faustus's description of Helen of Troy or any stage achieve the widespread geographical diversity and range of Tamburlaine's conquests? It is with some of these thoughts in mind that we present this current, comprehensive series, remembering that all radio drama productions really take place inside the head of you, the listener!

I very much hope that this brief programme guide to Marlowe's plays by the producers who have directed the dramas for radio - plus an incisive central essay by David Margolies on Marlowe's singularities as a writer - will add to the pleasure of listening to Marlowe's texts. However, the best contemporary critique of any dramatist's work will always be a new production of it. Dr. Margolies states that Christopher Marlowe is 'Elizabethan theatre's gift to radio'. It is a gift we can all share in celebrating by participating in the experience of these Radio 3 productions.

**John Tydeman**  
**Head of Drama, Radio**

## **'More than Heavenly Power Permits': Marlowe and Individualism**

When Christopher Marlowe was killed in Deptford 400 years ago - on 30 May, 1593 - he was one of the most popular dramatists of the English stage. He was a personality in the ascendant. Almost single-handedly he had dragged Elizabethan drama into the modern age and made it an instrument that resounded through all sections of society. The intensity and violence of his plays appealed to an audience that delighted in spectacle and expansive gesture. Elizabethan theatre-goers, like film and television viewers of today, took pleasure in watching villains commit dreadful deeds and meet their deserved downfalls. But the themes that run through Marlowe's plays also touched something deeper in the lives of his audience, and many of these themes have become relevant again today. In periods of rapid social change - the late twentieth century as well as the Elizabethan age - the balance between social order and individualism and how individuals are defined become issues of passionate debate. They are not just philosophical problems; they are driven by people's aspirations for the future and also fuelled by long-standing resentments that rise to the surface with the awareness of change. This is why in 1993 Marlowe is outstandingly contemporary.

The conditions of the theatre have obviously changed in the centuries between Marlowe's time and ours. The things that were once especially attractive to Elizabethan audiences are now often of little interest and, likewise, audiences of today expect things from plays that Elizabethan theatre was never designed to provide. This conflict of tastes poses enormous problems for any production of the plays - particularly stage production. But they are resolvable on radio: radio is the medium that can most easily retain the qualities which appealed to Elizabethans and at the same time make Marlowe exciting for today.

## Marlowe and the radio

Marlowe is credited with transforming the clumsy unrhymed decasyllables used by Sackville and Norton in *Gorboduc*, the first English tragedy, to produce a flexible and resonant medium - the blank verse that became the language of the Elizabethan stage. Ben Jonson called it 'Marlowe's mighty line', and Marlowe was well aware of his achievement. In the Prologue to *Tamburlaine* he distinguishes himself from the crude versifiers whose material could pass only as rural entertainment:

*From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-wits,  
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,  
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,  
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine  
Threatening the world with high astounding terms,  
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword,  
View but his picture in this tragic glass,  
And then applaud his fortunes as you please.*

When Marlowe characterises his play as a 'tragic glass' it is not tragic because of ill fortune - Tamburlaine rises and rises - but because it is serious, concerned with high matter as in 'the stately tent of war'. This elevation and state can be attributed only in part to the subject matter of kings and battles; these achieve their high status when they are *made* stately by the dignified and elaborated language in which Marlowe presents them. The language determines their qualities.

The way language is used today may make it difficult to understand the degree of sensitivity the Elizabethans had to different kinds of language and the diverse pleasures they found in it. In a world flooded with radio and television and other aural and visual signals, where we are largely accustomed to using language instrumentally (to give directions, get a cup of coffee, etc.), decorative, rhetorical language of the kind Marlowe uses may seem inefficient or merely affected. The Elizabethans did not use language only to provide a mirror of objective reality, and for

entertainment they expected expressive speech that gave the world colour and character. Why go to the theatre to see an unadorned reality? Why pay to listen to language you can hear in the street for nothing? Thus Barabas offers an extravagant catalogue of death and destruction:

*As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,  
And kill sick people groaning under walls.  
Sometimes I go about and poison wells;  
...  
Then after that was I an usurer,  
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,  
And tricks belonging unto brokery,  
I fill'd the gaols with bankrupts in a year,  
And with young orphans planted hospitals;  
And every moon made some or other mad,  
And now and then one hang himself for grief,  
Plunging upon his breast a long great scroll  
How I with interest tormented him. (II, iii, 179-203)*

The language shows Barabas to be a psychopath but it also makes him exciting to listen to. His monstrous vision, because it is so obviously impossible, turns into heroic boasting and entertainingly sets him apart from ordinary life.

For the Elizabethans language does something and possesses a substantial quality. When the Prologue promises Tamburlaine 'threatening the world with high astounding terms', these terms are part of the threat, not just the means to relay it to the ears of the audience. If the opening of *Doctor Faustus* is gripping despite the absence of any visually interesting action (the hero is merely reflecting on his life), then the scene's intensity is due to the language; all the 'action' is in the language. For Thomas Nashe, Marlowe's friend and collaborator on *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, words became practically material things. He threatened his enemies with the power of the vocabulary he had stored up for revenge: 'I have terms (if I be vexed) laid in steep in Aquafortis and



Gunpowder, that shall rattle through the Skies, and make an Earthquake in a Peasant's ears'. Language is something real in itself. It is as elemental as earth, water, air and fire.

The attraction of the language, as Nashe's image of the earthquake in the peasant's ears suggests, is to the sense of hearing as well as to the intellect. Part of the 'might' of Marlowe's line lies in its sensual appeal, the patterns of sound that he creates, the ascending quality of his blank-verse speeches and the broad waves of rhetoric that resonate through the brain. This makes him a playwright ideal for radio.

It may also be the case that today's audiences, accustomed for the most part to expect naturalism from drama, can accommodate Marlowe's elaborated language better on radio than in the theatre. The actors' voices 'humanise' the formality of the rhetoric and the intimacy of radio production, offering the counterpart of television's close-up, overcomes distance suggested by the gigantic scale of the heroes.

Paradoxically, Marlowe's *vision* may be more effectively understood through radio. One of the characteristics of his vision is that it must be realised in the imagination; it cannot be given a concrete picture. Thus when Faustus, ravished by Helen's beauty, says, 'Was this the face that launched a thousand ships, / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?' (V.i.97-8), we can understand the force of her beauty through the idea of the thousand ships and Ilium's topless towers but never have to see her. If we try to estimate it by comparison with the face of a real and present actress, we miss the point. We can 'see' her beauty better with nothing to look at. Time and again Marlowe portrays character through words alone. The very qualities that strain the understanding of modern audiences *seeing* the plays make them ideal for listening. And after 400 years Marlowe can still 'make an earthquake' in our ears. He is Elizabethan theatre's gift to radio.

## Individualism and revolt

Marlowe offers Elizabethan England's most intense treatment of individualism, the fundamental theme of the Renaissance. In *Tamburlaine*, his first great popular success, the hero rises from a mere shepherd to become ruler of half the world. Marlowe's concern is not with the action, the process of conquest itself. Rather, the imaginative energy of the play is directed toward how Tamburlaine defines himself; the focus is on his assertion of his own individuality and his rejection of all that restricts it. Tamburlaine makes clear early on that he is much more than his appearance indicates. When Zenocrate (his captive and later his wife), who has first addressed him as 'shepherd', calls him 'lord', Tamburlaine replies:

*I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove,*

*And yet a shepherd by my parentage* (I.ii.7,33,34-5).

He is what his actions make him, not what he is classified as according to the fortune of birth or the conventions of society. Thus when he offers his hand to his new ally, Theridamas, in confirmation of their alliance, it is, he says, 'as much as if I swore by heaven, / And call'd the gods to witness of my vow.' (I.ii.233-4). His handshake is made a guarantee equal to the whole pantheon of religion, and Tamburlaine is thus the equal of the gods. His authority derives simply from himself, not from anything else.

Tamburlaine's arrogance here may be astonishing but it must be understood in relation to the context in which the plays were written. Tamburlaine is not constructed by Marlowe to be a developed or psychologically accurate character - he is a bundle of responses to the repression of individuality in the Elizabethan world. In the official thinking of the Elizabethans which step on the social ladder people were born was the most important determinant of their lives. If you were not of the aristocracy (derived from the Greek *aristos*, best), then by definition you could not be very good. A society where people's individual abilities, skills, intelligence or talent were not recognised if their social station was low must have caused intolerable frustration for people

in the late sixteenth century. In Elizabethan London 90% of the population had been born in another place and migrated to London. The city must have been full of creative individuals seeking an escape from an inflexible hierarchy of social class - people tired of being denied advancement because they were called 'peasant', the epithet Marlowe's most negative characters use to put down others. The Guise in *The Massacre at Paris*, for example, who is a murderous schemer and a caricature of anti-English attitudes, repeatedly expresses a hierarchical scorn, as when he dismisses the idea that he too could be murdered: 'Tut, they are peasants. I am Duke of Guise' (V,ii,73); and when he is given his death's wound he reiterates the notion: 'To die by peasants, what a grief is this!' (V,ii,88).

It should be made clear that Marlowe is not arguing for social justice (something which might reasonably be said of Shakespeare in *King Lear*, for example) nor is he presenting the world from the perspective of the peasantry or advocating popular revolution. The point Marlowe starts from, and where the emotional energy of most of his plays is located, is the single oppressed individual. But the oppression, however individually felt, arises from the social structure, and countless others are subject to the same oppression: Marlowe's individual speaks for thousands.

The emphasis Marlowe placed on qualities inherent in the individual was a challenge to established order because it denied the connection between excellence and birth. In *The Massacre at Paris*, the wicked Guise attacks the renowned Renaissance philosopher Ramus for presumption as he is about to be killed: 'Why suffer you that peasant to declaim?'; and Anjou prefaces the fatal blow with 'Ne'er was there collier's son so full of pride' (I,vi,54,56). Tamburlaine's early opponent, Cosroe, expresses the same attitude in relation to shepherds: 'What means this devilish shepherd, to aspire / With such giantly presumption' (II,vi,1-2). Similarly, the conflict that underlies *Edward II* is more than a struggle between king and nobles; it is also that, when he elevates

to high office his lover Gaveston (hardly 'a gentleman by birth', in the view of the nobles, I,iv,29), the king pays no attention to inherited rank. As the Younger Mortimer says of Gaveston,

*his wanton humour grieves not me;*

*But this I scorn, that one so basely born*

*Should by his sovereign's favour grow so pert* (I,iv,404-6).

This view is often repeated by the other nobles. Kent sees Edward as 'unnatural', not in his homosexuality, but in slaughtering nobles and cherishing flatterers (IV,i,8-9); i.e., Edward is undermining the social order.

Gaveston in turn is hostile to the nobles' assumption of their worthiness on the sole basis of the position they were born into: 'Base, leaden earls, that glory in your birth, / Go sit at home, and eat your tenants' beef' (II,ii,74-5). This view of useless, exploitative gentility exalted only by high birth is presented also by the king himself when he approves of Baldock whose gentility is 'fetch'd from Oxford, not from heraldry' (II,ii,244) - i.e., he has risen by merit, his status of gentleman gained from being a graduate of the university.

In *Edward II* even kingship itself is denied inherent virtue. When Edward says, 'But what are kings, when regiment is gone, / But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?' (V,i,26-7), he makes kingship into merely a role. Likewise in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Dido presents being queen as a role, one she would cast off to pursue her love for Aeneas (IV,iv,134-5; V,i,197-8).

In *Tamburlaine* Marlowe also mocks those who rely on the distinctions of birth. King Mycetes assumes himself to be authoritative because he has inherited a position of authority, and likewise he assumes that Tamburlaine's personal qualities will be limited by inherited low social position. When the magnificent conqueror meets the foolish king who is trying to hide his crown on the battlefield, he teases him, taking the crown and returning it with an eloquent conclusion:

*Here, take it for a while: I lend it thee,*

*Till I may see thee hemm'd with armed men.*



*Then shalt thou see me pull it from thy head:*

*Thou art no match for mighty Tamburlaine.*

Mycetes is unable to see any qualities beyond Tamburlaine's lowly origins and Marlowe scornfully represents his limited sense of the possibility of change and development of people by having him say when Tamburlaine exits,

*O gods, is this Tamburlaine the thief?*

*I marvel much he stole it not away. (II,iv,36-41)*

The source of Tamburlaine's individuality is nature; he explains his course of conquest as natural behaviour, part of human nature dictated by the elements. In his most spacious and exciting vision of the nature of humanity Marlowe defines human nature in terms of aspiration:

*Nature, that fram'd us of four elements*

*Warring within our breasts for regiment,*

*Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds.*

*Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend*

*The wondrous architecture of the world,*

*And measure every wandering planet's course,*

*Still climbing after knowledge infinite,*

*And always moving as the restless spheres,*

*Will us to wear ourselves and never rest,*

*Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,*

*That perfect bliss and sole felicity,*

*The sweet fruition of an earthly crown. (II,vii,18-29)*

The very elements from which the world is constructed make for diversity of people and intellectual aspiration. In true Renaissance fashion, Man is the measure of all things, capable of knowing all things, and ultimately aspiring to the goal of humankind, as stated even in the first chapter of Genesis, 'dominion over fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' His followers reiterate Tamburlaine's point that aspiration is the distinguishing feature of humanity. The vision is similar to

Hamlet's much quoted praise of Man: 'what piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties . . . in apprehension how like a god'.

Despite Marlowe's use of the crown as the focus of aspiration, individuality as he presents it is independent of material possession or station. Advertising has accustomed people today to the idea that individuality resides in the purchase of some commodity - owning a 'custom' model of this or wearing a particular brand of that is supposed to distinguish a person from the otherwise undifferentiated mass. For Marlowe it is the spirit that is the determinant of individuality, and the crown that Tamburlaine makes glow with his desire is for the inert Mycetes no more than a material object. Marlowe's biggest heroes in fact attempt to escape the restrictions of being bound to a material world: Faustus struggles against the limits of mortality,

Tamburlaine against the spatial limits of his existence and Barabas against the finite nature of possession. They reject anything that imposes limits on their will. Faustus, for example, rejects the pursuit of logic, of law and of religion because the premisses presuppose the conclusions, giving him no scope to will anything different. These studies, as he says of law, are servile: to pursue them he must deny his creativity. Faustus's rejection of religion, the conventional study that is most attractive to him, is summed up in the line 'What will be, shall be'; if that's the case, then why bother? The picture is of a world that denies personal initiative, an anti-human, bureaucratic, deeply depressing world that Faustus's sense of his own individuality will not, cannot, tolerate.

The individuation Marlowe presents through his heroes is not an exclusive preserve of 'top people'; it is, after all, nature that makes the spirit from which individuality comes, and thus it is inherent in everybody. Similarly, kingship is not seen in exclusive terms of one ruler and everybody else ruled. When Tamburlaine has his first crown in prospect he reflects on the glories of kingship: 'Is it not passing brave to be a king, / And ride in triumph through Persepolis?' One of his followers even elevates

kingship above divinity - 'A god is not so glorious as a king'. Addressing his assembled followers, Tamburlaine asks, 'Will you be kings?' Their affirmation receives his warm approval, he adds that he too would be a king and then, addressing the audience, he says, 'And so would you my masters, would you not?' (II.v.53-4, 57, 67, 69-70). Kingship is, by nature, within the grasp of every human being. Exclusivity is associated with negative attitudes; the Guise says: 'What glory is there in a common good, / That hangs for every peasant to achieve?' (I.ii.40-41). Marlowe's idea of kingship, however paradoxical it may seem, is essentially democratic.

With such an active, powerful sense of their own individuality, it follows that Marlowe's heroes are especially resistant to anything that would constrain it, and they react violently to anything that challenges it. Tamburlaine destroys utterly those who scorn him, Faustus puts horns on the head of the mocking Benvolio, Barabas causes the greedy friars who think to out-fox him to kill each other, the Guise organises the massacre of Protestants but also arranges the assassination of Mugeroun by whom he feels personally insulted, and even Aeneas eventually spurns Dido to fulfil his destiny.

Marlowe is not exhibiting a paranoid over-reaction here; his heroes are responding to the conditions of the age, the self-seeking, scornful, uncaring, bureaucratic society echoed in Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy:

*who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despit'd love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes* (III.i.70-74).

But Marlowe questions in his plays why merit should be patient at all, and why give precedence to the unworthy, however great their rank. Machiavelli's *Prince*, one of the most cited (even if not so often read) books of the age, presents a similar picture. *The Prince* does not live up to its terrible reputation for wicked delight in murder and treason. Rather, Machiavelli is concerned throughout

with how to control real political situations and is motivated by the desire to be free of domination; it is only the ruler who avoids being ruled. But Marlowe, unlike Machiavelli, offers no rational scheme of behaviour to deal with the conditions of his society that enrage him; instead he produces drama of explosive intensity.

The postures developed and attitudes presented in Marlowe's major work, even though part of the entertainment, come into conflict with positions held in the outside world. For example, in his grand gestures, soaring rhetoric and magnificent spirit, Tamburlaine wins a following in the play and is established as heroic; he is attractive. For the audience to find him attractive, however, involves the negation of outside authority: we cannot accept Tamburlaine's magnificence and at the same time give highest value to the gods we swear by - we must choose. Thus, insofar as the audience responds positively to the hero's attitudes *Tamburlaine* is subversive. These attitudes were recognised as subversive in Marlowe's own day. Shakespeare deals with them but from a different perspective. In *King Lear* Edmund asserts his total independence, saying that he is completely responsible for himself: 'I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing!'. Shakespeare condemns Edmund as a villain, whereas Marlowe never challenges Tamburlaine's stance. Marlowe does, however, present a criticism of Faustus's position in the epilogue of the Chorus, advising the audience that the play should warn them to 'mind their own business':

*Regard his hellish fall,  
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise  
Only to wonder at unlawful things,  
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits,  
To practise more than heavenly power permits.* (V.iii.23-7)

But this is no more than a formal concession to censorship; the interest of the play, the attraction of Faustus, and thus the basis of his being the dramatic hero is his assertion of his individuality, his questioning and his will to understand. He is a hero as a result of



the very qualities for which he is condemned by the Chorus, and thus the play is necessarily in conflict with the status quo. Although Shakespeare may feel responsible for exploring in the plot the consequences of characters' attitudes, Marlowe makes no concession to the demands of responsibility and the rebellion of his characters is unrestrained. That is part of the pleasure of the plays.

### The limits of humanity

Beyond the democratic notion of individuality, Marlowe also offers a noble vision of human potential and a world that can be transformed. In its most obvious form it involves *material* transformation, the hero fulfilling his own desires. Thus Tamburlaine brings half the globe under his control and Faustus in his first consideration of the potential of his magical powers thinks also of material things. He says he will make the spirits

*fly to India for gold,*

*Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,*

*...*

*I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,*

*And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg. (I, i, 81-8)*

Again, he says he will

*make a bridge through the air*

*To pass the ocean. With a band of men*

*I'll join the hills that bind the Affrick shore,*

*And make that country continent to Spain (I, iii, 105-8).*

Faustus also seeks political goals of the anti-Catholic sort that occur in *The Massacre at Paris*, such as driving the Spanish out of Germany. But most of Faustus's concern is with transformation that is not limited to material things. When he has received his new powers Mephostophilis says, 'Faustus, ask me what thou wilt.' What he asks for is not the things he earlier said magic would provide for him, such as gold, luxuries, rare foods and other material goods; instead he demands knowledge: 'First will I question with thee about hell.' (I, v, 117-18). His excitement is in understanding.

Like Tamburlaine, Faustus is not a developed character.

We know little about him other than, again like Tamburlaine, he rose to prominence from 'parents base of stock'. Whereas Hamlet, say, is given enough psychological individuation by Shakespeare for us to be able to wonder about his childhood, his relations with his parents, etc., none of Marlowe's characters prompts such questioning. They must be understood as types. That is, they represent certain attitudes and responses that, even though they are located in a character, relate primarily to the type of situation rather than to the peculiar development of any one person's life. Faustus, then, must be understood not in terms of aspirations that arise from his own particular circumstances (born in Rhodes, studied in Wittenburg, etc.) but from a general aspiration frustrated by conditions of existence characteristic of the period, frustrations that affect the audience as well as the hero.

The appeal of magic to Faustus is made understandable by what he rejects when he decides to turn to magic. All the disciplines he rejects are in one way or another limited and therefore he feels them to be restrictive. Faustus knows he *could* know things he does not know; i.e., there are things that are knowable which he is held back from knowing. Some of these restrictions are conceived as simply material and as such are easily overcome with the increased powers gained through magic. Thus Faustus wants information from all over the world that he cannot personally have access to, like what plants grow in all the world. He asks for and receives from Mephostophilis books that are, as it were, complete guides to magic, astronomy/astrology and botany (I, v, 168-80), and he is thrilled. This was an easy demand. His longing for direct personal understanding of the cosmos is harder to satisfy but Mephostophilis takes him on a tour of the universe that provides what he wants.

Other restrictions are much more difficult to overcome because they involve Faustus's nature as a human: they define him in a way he refuses to accept. Thus religion presents a code of permitted activity that defines people as lacking in judgement,

unable to think for themselves and needing outside guidance. Faustus is held back by the God that forbade Adam and Eve the Tree of Knowledge. The only way he can have access to the forbidden knowledge for him is to violate the restrictive code, to turn from the jealous God to the devil. Then it will be possible for him to know all knowable things if he learns the practice of magic: 'his dominion that exceeds in this / Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man (I,1,59-60). Living up to Tamburlaine's description of nature making people constantly strive and rebel against the status quo, Faustus is 'still climbing after knowledge infinite, and always moving as the restless spheres'.

### **Renaissance visionaries**

The vision of the possibilities released by escape from religion's restrictive code is the heroic vision of the Renaissance - the sense of understanding related to a world of practice where knowledge really is power, where adequate understanding can transform the conditions of existence. This is the vision of the great Renaissance architect and polymath Leon Battista Alberti, who planned to remove the marble church of San Miniato above Florence to a better location, a scheme made possible, he thought, by his grasp of the science of mechanics (he never attempted it - the attitude seen in the intention is the important thing). It is the vision of the historian Guicciardini who believed that knowledge of past events could increase control over the present, or of Machiavelli who wanted to bring politics within the compass of human reason, of Leonardo who considered how people might fly, of Galileo who insisted on exploring the real movements of the solar system. It is a vision of transforming the world, of extending the range of the possible, which, to pioneering spirits in the dawn of the Renaissance, seemed infinite. Marlowe fits into this pattern by creating dramatic characters who themselves strive to reach beyond possibility.

Yet to break social codes, to run before the rest of humanity even in search of social goals, is to face isolation (in Galileo's actual case, imprisonment). In making a bond with the devil Faustus alienates himself from conventional society. Tamburlaine was supported by his friends but Faustus, even with his servant Wagner, is alone. The images of a man making a pact with the devil and facing damnation are not so much the story of sin and retribution as representations of the isolation that Marlowe sees facing the visionary Faustus.

Although Faustus knows that he must be damned, he is initially naive about the alienation that will accompany the bargain. Mephostophilis tries to explain when Faustus asks how it is that he is out of hell:

*Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.  
Think'st thou that I that saw the face of God  
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,  
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells  
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?  
Oh, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,  
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul. (I,iii,76-82)*

Faustus does not understand and replies with ignorant bravado:

*What, is great Mephostophilis so passionate  
For being deprived of the joys of heaven?  
Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,  
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess. (I,iii,83-6)*

The conflict faced by Faustus, what he must forsake in order to achieve what he gains, is thus much deeper than that presented to any other of Marlowe's heroes. Tamburlaine and Barabas are frustrated by physical impossibility, Faustus by the contradiction that his social action in enlarging human possibility deprives him of society.

The point of conflict for Faustus moves from social restriction to the nature of humanity. Faustus embodies the restless Renaissance nature of 'climbing after knowledge infinite'. This is not an inability to 'let well enough alone' but that there is



no reason he can see to do so; 'well enough' is not sufficient if there could be better. 'Well enough' could be acceptable if it were permanent, and since that is impossible the inescapable failing of humanity for Faustus is mortality. This too was a constant theme of the Renaissance: the recognition that humanity is excellent was accompanied by the understanding that all people must perish. The destruction of individuality so painfully achieved is perhaps most succinctly expressed in Shakespeare's sonnet 60: 'And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.' This simultaneity of welcoming individuality and recognising its inevitable destruction is the great Elizabethan melancholy, the combination of sweet anticipation and tragedy: 'This thought is as a death, which cannot choose / But weep to have that which it fears to lose.' (Sonnet 64).

Shakespeare attempted to fight the eternal void by making a permanent cultural mark with his sonnets: 'And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand' (Sonnet 60); Marlowe has Faustus conjure up a cultural mark already well established, Helen of Troy. This scene has often been misconstrued as primarily sexual (which was indeed the case in *The Historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of Doctor Iohn Faustus* of 1592, the source from which Marlowe drew his plot). Helen is not just someone of relative beauty (like the most striking of Page Three girls) - she is *absolute* beauty. Faustus mentions none of the coal-black eyes or milk-white breasts of love poetry and Marlowe never localises her beauty; it remains insubstantial: 'Oh, thou art fairer than the evening's air' (V.i.110). In fact Helen's beauty is presented in terms that embody the collective experience of the epic of Troy and Greek mythology: 'More lovely than the monarch of the sky, / In wanton Arethusa's azure arms' (V.i.114-15). For Faustus to encounter Helen sexually is for him to be in touch with something that, because it is absolute beauty and frozen classical experience, is outside the flux of time. But even if the permanence Faustus attempts is illusory, it involves a dignity far beyond the single individual and vision on a scale far beyond the events of everyday life. All of Marlowe's major characters have something of this

vision. The Guise says, 'That like I best that flies beyond my reach' (I.ii.42); Tamburlaine, 'I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about' (I.ii.174-5); and even Barabas, who would 'inclose / Infinite riches in a little room' (I.i.36-7), provides a heroic vision of material wealth in attempting the impossible, to confine the infinite in finite space. Edward, although lacking the spiritual quality of Faustus, Tamburlaine or Barabas, still rises to an evocation of revenge that displays a comparable spaciousness of vision:

*I'll fire thy crazed buildings, and enforce  
The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground,  
With slaughter'd priests make Tiber's channel swell,  
And banks rais'd higher with their sepulchres!* (I.iv.101-4)

Marlowe creates a heroism of unrivalled magnificence and grandeur. The vastness of the scale redefines human experience. The spirits of his characters expand to dwarf the concerns of everyday reality, and their boundless will challenges possibility itself. Their vision 'stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man', as far, today, as radio waves can carry it.

**David Margolies**

(David Margolies lectures in English at Goldsmiths' College and is the author of *Monsters of the Deep: Social Dissolution in Shakespeare's Tragedies*.)





# THE Tragedie of Dido

*Queen of Carthage:*

Played by the Children of her

*Maiesties Chappell.*

Written by Christopher Marlowe, and  
*Thomas Nashe. Gent.*

## ACTORS

<i>Jupiter.</i>	<i>Ascanius.</i>
<i>Gaius.</i>	<i>Dido.</i>
<i>Venus.</i>	<i>Anna.</i>
<i>Cupid.</i>	<i>Achates.</i>
<i>Iano.</i>	<i>Ilioneus.</i>
<i>Mercutio.</i>	<i>Iarbas.</i>
<i>Hermes.</i>	<i>Claonides.</i>
<i>Aeneas.</i>	<i>Sergeffus.</i>



AT LONDON,  
Printed, by the Widdowe Orwin, for Thomas Woodcocke, and  
are to be sold at his shop, in Paules Church-yard, at  
the signe of the blacke Beare. 1594.

considerable power and poetic poignancy. The very best features of Marlowe's writing have been retained: Aeneas' graphic and moving description of the Fall of Troy (perhaps the basis of the Player King's monologue when he first meets Hamlet upon arriving at Elsinore—"What's Hecuba to him, or her to Hecuba/That he should weep for her?"); Dido's ornamental poetry that weaves a web of seduction around Aeneas; the tense struggle as lovers are forced to part by orders from on high (a plot practically duplicated later by Shakespeare in his own *Antony and Cleopatra*).

By keeping this radio production simple and direct, almost like a chamber piece, we have tried to let Marlowe's muscular blank verse cast its spell on the listener. We have used radio's unique capacity to hear the voice in 'close-up'. In this first of his dramas Marlowe lets us know that all his plays will capitalize on blank verse's capacity to characterize, dramatize and set scenes through words alone. We never need to see Carthage or the Fall of Troy, or even the actors who play Dido and Aeneas, because Marlowe's language animates all we need to experience. As elemental as air, water, earth and fire, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* takes the listener directly to the heart of private passions and sufferings. It also sets the basic terms for all the Marlowe plays to follow.

**Michael Earley**

## CAST

*Dido*.....SALLY DEXTER  
*Aeneas*.....TIMOTHY WALKER  
*Iarbas*.....JEREMY BLAKE  
*Achates*.....BEN THOMAS  
*Anna/Juno*.....TERESA GALLAGHER  
*Sergestus/Hermes*.....DAVID THORPE  
*Jupiter/Illioneus*.....JOHN WEBB  
*Cloanthus*.....PHILIP ANTHONY  
*Ascanius/First Lord*.....IAN SHAW  
*Venus*.....DIANA PAYAN  
*Cupid*.....ANDREW WINCOTT  
*Ganymede*.....MATTHEW SIM  
  
 Script Assistance.....JOCELYN BOXALL

Directors .....MICHAEL EARLEY & ALAN DRURY

## DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE

Christopher Marlowe's first play, *The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage*, was written before Marlowe left university at Cambridge in 1587. The title page from the published edition of the play in 1594, a year after Marlowe's death, suggests the drama was done in collaboration with Thomas Nashe. But most commentators now believe that Marlowe wrote the play largely, if not solely, himself. There is further evidence to suggest that the plays was first performed by a company of boy actors. *Dido* is probably the rarest and least performed of Marlowe's plays.

Large portions of *Dido* are based on Books I, II and IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*, an epic tale thoroughly familiar to Renaissance audiences. Following the fall of Troy, Aeneas wanders for seven years and is shipwrecked off the coast of northern Africa. He is received by Dido, Queen of Carthage, and they fall in love when Dido is pricked by Cupid's arrow. Manipulated by the gods to follow his destiny and found Rome, Aeneas renounces his vows of love for Dido and abruptly sails for Italy. Dido commits suicide by hurling herself on a burning pyre, closing the play to the crackling of flames.

Although *Dido* shows all the signs of a young playwright's efforts—wholesale borrowings from his source, enough mythological references to confuse even the lost learned listener, static action and one dimensional characters in the secondary roles and sub-plots—it would be a mistake to think of *Dido* as a minor effort. In this hour-long radio version we have trimmed the play of its many excesses and tangents, uncovering a tense and swiftly paced romantic tragedy of



improbable that it doesn't matter who is doing what to whom or even why. The pace is so dizzying. There are even heavy doses of grotesque comedy which are impossible to avoid in the playing. To a large degree the play becomes like a horror comic and we have not disguised this fact in our production. *Massacre* depicts man the political and religious beast irrationally red in tooth and claw: Marlowe, our contemporary.

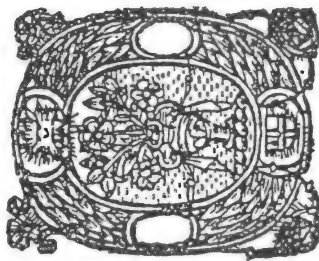
Alan Drury

# THE MASSACRE AT PARIS:

With the Death of the Duke  
of Guise.

As it was plaide by the right honourable the  
Lord high *Admirall* his Seruants.

Written by *Christopher Marlowe*.



AT LONDON

Printed by E. A. for Edward White, dwelling neere  
the little North doore of S. Paules  
Church, at the signe of  
the Gun.

## CAST

Charles IX / Surgeon.....JOHN WEBB  
 Anjou, later Henry III.....TIMOTHY WALKER  
 Duke of Guise.....JEREMY BLAKE  
 Queen Catherine.....SALLY DEXTER  
 Navarre, later Henry IV.....BEN THOMAS  
 Margaret, Duchess of Guise.....TERESA GALLAGHER  
 Condé / Mugeroun / Son of Guise.....ANDREW WINCOTT  
 Apothecary / Dumaine / Joyeux.....MATTHEW SIM  
 Admiral / Seroune / Pleshé.....PHILIP ANTHONY  
 Gonzago / Loreine / Epernoun.....IAN SHAW  
 Retes / Cardinal.....DAVID THORPE  
 Old Queen / Seroune's Wife.....DIANA PAYAN

*Assorted assassins and sundry victims played by members  
 of the cast.*

Script Assistance.....JOCELYN BOXALL

Directors .....MICHAEL EARLEY & ALAN DRURY

## THE MASSACRE AT PARIS

With *Edward II* Marlowe revitalised the chronicle play, giving it a dramatically structured plot and a stronger sense of individual characterization. The play was a success. It is probable that Marlowe wanted to follow up this success with a more contemporary chronicle play, *The Massacre at Paris*, written in 1592-93, and his last play. The full text we have is incomplete and obviously at times corrupt. One editor of Marlowe's plays called it 'shockingly garbled'. For this abridged radio version we have edited down the play to an hour, cutting away lines and sub-plots which stall the play's forward momentum.

The play is about the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (24 August-15 September 1572) in which Catholics took to the streets of Paris and murdered Protestant Huguenots, sparking similar events throughout France. What appears to be sectarian strife actually conceals dynastic and political struggle among different branches of a ruling family. Marlowe seized on the subject because of his own religious scepticism and also because of his own position in Elizabethan England. Marlowe himself had become enmeshed in intricate secret service activities, making enemies among various factions, and had even posed as a Catholic abroad to gain intelligence. The play is virulently anti-Catholic and at the end of the play blood torn France looks to Queen Elizabeth's England for a model of Protestant rectitude.

Nowadays it would be easy to set the play in, say, Northern Ireland or the Balkans. Deep-rooted factional and sectarian violence urge events in the play from massacre to massacre. However, the underlying sensibility of Marlowe's *Massacre* is disturbingly post-modern. The action is so chaotic and



tangled ambitions and complex emotions that drive each character. Offsetting these strings is the sound of percussion.

In the end we hope that what you experience will be both a taut and thunderous journey through the final death throes of a king for whom love was worth more than kingdom.

**Clive Brill**

# The troublefome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the fecond, King of England: with the tragical *fall of proud Mortimer:*

As it was fundrie times publiquely acted  
*in the honourable citie of London, by the*  
right honourable the Earle of Pem-  
*brooke his seruants.*

*Written by* Chri. Marlow Gent.



Imprinted at London for *William Iones,*  
dwelling neere Holbourn conduit at the  
*Signe of the Gunne,* 1594

## CAST

Edward.....ROBERT GLENNISTER  
 Young Mortimer.....STEVE HODSON  
 Gaveston/Gurney.....ROBERT PATTERSON  
 Queen Isabella.....ADJOA ANDOH  
 Young Spencer.....DAVID HOLT  
 Lancaster/Winchester.....KEITH DRINKEL  
 Warwick/Matrevils.....MARK STRAKER  
 Kent.....SCOTT CHERRY  
 Mortimer Sr / Arundel / Mower.....JONATHAN ADAMS  
 Canterbury / Levune / Hainault.....JOHN WEBB  
 Baldock / Berkeley.....DAVID THORPE  
 Edward III.....MONTY ALLEN  
 Pembroke / Rice Ap Howel.....JOHN CHURCH  
 Coventry / Old Spencer / Leicester.....PHILIP ANTHONY  
 Leicester.....JONATHAN TAFLE  
 Lady Margaret.....FEDERAY HOLMES

*Music played by the AD HOC STRING QUARTET:* JULIA SINGLETON on First Violin, SARAH WHITE on Second Violin, JOCELYN POOK on Viola, and SIAN BELL on Cello.

*Percussion by* MACIEK HRYBOWICZ

Composer and Music Director.....DOMINIQUE LEGENDRE

Director.....CLIVE BRILL

## EDWARD II

MORTIMER: *Why should you love him whom the world hates so?*  
 EDWARD: *Because he loves me more than all the world.*

Despite this wonderful, tender, question-and-answer couplet in the midst of a scene charged with political machinations and macho preening, *Edward II* is not a play about gay pride and homosexual rights. It is a play about love, certainly; and it's about kingship, the burden of responsibility and the use and abuse of absolute power. Increasingly it has become Marlowe's most popular play with contemporary audiences.

Notwithstanding God's appointment of Edward, this mercurial king who stands at the centre of the drama, the host of barons who plot rebellion against his rule are spitefully aware of their growing strength. If each of them cannot be king himself, collectively they are determined to ensure that Edward fulfills their own power fantasies. Nothing annoys them more than Edward's uncertainty about whether the private or public parts of his life should take precedence—his deep bond to Gaveston or his duty to God and country.

So Marlowe, like all the best playwrights, has fashioned history and language to his own purpose, producing a hot political thriller which moves with lightening speed to expose two great human frailties: the desperate wish to be loved and the pathetic desire to control. In this production we have sought to bring out this central dichotomy. Love and power battle it out to destruction.

We've used a string quartet to help drive the story forward; to underline the inner wrangling of the mind versus the necessity for political expedience; and to complement or sound the



# THE TRAGICALL

## History of D. Faustus.

*As it hath bene Acted by the Right  
Honorable the Earle of Nottingham his servants.*

Written by Ch. Marl.



LONDON

Printed by V.S. for Thomas Baskett. 1604.

the humour which is expressed in a language now arcane and difficult to interpret without the actors giving some physical clues?

The starting point for me lay in Marlowe's words 'hell hath no limits', and yet there had to be some definition. In order to create this 'hell' a choice had to be made that would work for radio. So as Faustus thirsts for knowledge and—in common with all dabblers in the black arts—sought to know the future as well as manipulate the present, it seemed appropriate that hell could be represented as the 'future' in all its alluring depravity. Music could provide the listener with a key. Thus there was the freedom to adopt a musical style from any period that was beyond 1588.

The musical score for the production became a hugely important part of our interpretation. Not only does music provide a texture and background, but it prepares us for and creates such moments as the appearance of Helen of Troy and Alexander, transporting us with Faustus and Mephistophiles on their ethereal travel in space. It also evokes the period. The sound can be outrageous, shocking or seductive. It is an approach to sound of his drama which I hope that Marlowe—the 'hell-raiser'—would have approved.

There are so many parallels between Marlowe and Faustus. Both set out on a dangerous journey, both thirsted for excitement and determined to push at the boundaries of knowledge and challenge the limiting concepts of their day which restricted and bored them. Their end was tragic because their brilliance was snuffed out through 'overreaching'.

This version of *Doctor Faustus* is not for the purist. It is, I hope, accessible and lively. When Marlowe wrote *Faustus* I think he wanted to challenge the theatre conventions of his day and, indeed, he was seen as a threat to dramatic tradition. He intended to surprise not just with his content but with his style. I have attempted to bring to this production that unpredictability which Marlowe craved in his own life, to hear him snap his fingers at convention and soar like the inspired imagery in his verse. But in the end 'the play's the thing' and, however told, *Faustus'* drama is a terrific tale for Marlowe's time as well as our own.

Sue Wilson

## CAST

Dr. Faustus.....STEPHEN MOORE  
Mephostophiles.....PHILIP VOSS  
Lucifer.....JOHN HOLLIS  
Bad Angel.....MICHAEL TUDOR BARNES  
Robin/Friar.....BARRIE RUTTER  
The Old Man.....MAURICE DENHAM  
Envy.....LORNA LAIDLAW  
Convertness/Ralph/Emperor.....LAWRENCE EVANS  
Cornelius.....DAVID MONICO  
Wife/Lechery.....LIZA SADOVY  
The Advocate.....KEITH DRINKEL  
Wagner/Wrath/Str Rudolph/Devil.....DAVID THORPE  
Good Angel.....TERESA GALLAGHER  
Valdes/Pride/Vintner.....JOHN WEBB  
Sloth/The Pope.....JOHN FLEMING  
Archbishop.....JOHN EVITTS  
Beelzebub/Gluttony.....JILL GRAHAM  
Horse Coarser.....JOHN BADDELEY

*Various Friars, Scholars and Crowds played by members of the cast.*

Composer.....ANTHEA GOMEZ

Musicians.....ANTHEA GOMEZ and TIM NEW

Adaptor and Director.....SUE WILSON

## THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS

It was towards the end of Tudor England when Christopher Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus* in 1588. He was living at a time when the world was expanding—an age of excitement and discovery, but also a time of religious persecution. This in turn created suspicion and led to the dangerous underworld of espionage, spawning a network of spies of which Marlowe, it is reputed, was himself one.

The fact that Marlowe was drawn into this cloaked world is evidence of his attraction to a lifestyle which harboured secrets. By dabbling in the murky waters of intelligence he demonstrated his enjoyment in taking risks. His desire to experiment, to test and break the rules involved him in 'unnatural practices' which confronted the morals of society on every level. Possessed of a brilliant mind, Marlowe saw life as a game to be won or lost but played with cunning and vigour.

So it was that this man in pursuit of pleasure and stimulation also dabbled in the black arts and it is no wonder that he found the existing story of Doctor Faustus so irresistible. Certainly he was able to draw on his own experiences to develop the central ideas of his play.

There has been a great deal of debate over how much of the extant *Doctor Faustus* (in its two different folio editions) was written by Marlowe. Some parts of the play may even have been censored. In this version I have attempted neither to unravel nor to further any of these arguments over text. I have taken what I hope is the best from both folio versions. Some rearrangement has taken place. As each folio version offers a variation on the text, I have chosen the language which seems the most accessible, consistent and stylistically pleasing.

Bringing this often performed stage play to the radio presented various problems that required interpretive solutions. There needed to be an exciting way of creating a visual picture for the listener as the play is essentially action viewed. How were the silent devils to be depicted, characters who appear so often and cause such profound shock and horror? How to portray the visions Hell on the radio and the Seven Deadly Sins who have such a visual impact on Faustus? And how to represent through an aural medium the spectacle of magic as well as